

RIGHT FROM THE START

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY INSTITUTES

OH, YOU LITTLE COQUETTE!

'Games' have their place—just not here!

We see it on nearly every sitcom: the snappy comeback, the smart rejoinder. The guy says something and the woman responds with an 'absolutely brilliant' put-down that is just hilarious. Hearing the canned laughter, we laugh along, as he drags himself off, red-faced and humiliated, to recover. We are not adept at dating. We don't know how to do it, so we take our cues from our friends, snappy articles in *Cosmo*, or that universally handy 'expert', TV.

People always laugh after the woman cuts her guy down to size, right? So, it must be funny to do. Ya think?

Hmm. The girl seems like a really nice person, just the one to round out your life. But how would she react if you play a little trick on her, give her a little challenge, a little 'test'? What if you tell her you are really not sure how you feel about her, that you have actually been thinking

about somebody else, and maybe, just maybe, you will go with that person instead of her? Maybe, she will like you more.

And what about playing 'hard to get'? The guy calls and you tell him you can't talk, because you are "washing your hair", when actually you are in your room, just waiting for him to

Our situations are absolutely different from the 'madcap' TV scenarios. We are relating to people with whom we want to build the center of the cosmos.

That takes love, not derision.

call back, so that you can play the game of 'Hard To Get' with him? Will he call

back? Will he continue to call when you tell him that now you are painting your nails and it will be a while before they dry? Will he pursue you, like in the movies?

Real Life

I've gotten my share of tearful, just-after-midnight hysterical and desperate calls from people that realized a moment too late that a potential spouse with whom they were getting along really

ON DEALING WITH 'REAL' SUBJECTS:

Many people are asking if we would address some of the knotty issues facing our Matching and Blessing candidates to date. In sharing these ideas, I wish to emphasize strongly that for specific answers, every candidate and family needs to consult first the 'Matching Handbook' and 'Finding the One' manuals, to avoid confusion. The Hardamans also have a wonderful book out there, 'Another Way to Marry', available for cheap on Amazon.

well and halfway up the aisle on the plane to Korea with his hands suddenly just thrown up his/her hands and said, "Enough!" They ask, "But what did I do wrong? I just wanted to see how much he liked me!" That is what happens when one gets confused about how to deal with a potential spouse: they start out thinking they are living in a sitcom about making love funny, but suddenly they find themselves in the middle of a sad country song about love lost.

One of the three great sins is 'Trampling of Heart'. The feelings of another person are nothing to toy with. Nothing is more attractive to another person than a sincere heart. Ours is a world in which disappointment, confusion and other slights and hurts seem to reign supreme. It is just not sensible to add to all the pain that is out there by playing coy.

"TOO SLEEPY" TO TALK

One fellow thought he had found the perfect woman with whom he would spend the rest of his life on earth and his eternal future. She, however, seemed never to be around when he called, and she would always tell him, "Oh, it's too early!" When he tried calling later in the evening, she would say, "Oh, it's too late now, and I am too sleepy. Call me back in the morning!" He said it was all just too much for him. He was glad that she had showed that side of herself to him before

they became engaged, but he was Done with her. He wrote her a polite but final note, saying he did not wish to complete the waiting period until they could be Blessed. She was terribly wounded. She liked him very much and actually thought he was a wonderful candidate. She contacted him several times after that, but nothing she said convinced him that he had been wrong to reject her. He moved on and she is still single.

THE LIFE YOU DESIRE

According to the Divine Principle, man and woman should reflect God through their actions of give and take. Banter and put-downs, especially at the very beginning of a relationship, when two people have only an idea of who they are, have no place in the relationship. Our situations tend to be multicultural, and even when two people are of the same external culture, one does not know what another's response might be if one becomes playful too quickly. What seems to be a hysterical joke to one person may be totally offensive to the person s/he most wants to impress. Especially when there are differences in culture or ethnic background, one may give offense without meaning to. For instance, the mother of one candidate decided to relate a story to her son's prospective spouse. She told how funny her family thought it was when her

granddaughter talked to her after seeing the candidate. "She's dirty!" the little girl said. Having observed the candidate's brown skin. "Tell her to take a bath!" The mother thought it was just the funniest thing, and thought the prospective spouse would be amused, too. But the African candidate was shocked. The marriage almost did not happen, not because of the child's innocent comment which was not said in the candidate's presence, but because the parent was insensitive to the impact it would have. It took a lot of fancy dancing on the candidate's part to convince the injured party that his whole family was not of the mind that she was 'dirty' and she should just ignore the enthusiastic but totally inappropriate comment as a clumsy stab at relating.

Given a choice, opt for respect and reserve. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to learn how to tickle the other person's funny-bone. Just be certain that your jokes are a playful poke in the ribs and not a stab in the heart.

Picture yourself hearing or reading the words you are about to communicate. Are they words you would want directed at you? Is the 'joke' or 'trick' you are about to play on your potential Other the one you would want played on you? It becomes necessary to consider the other person's response, especially in

those first days, when everything is so new and feelings are so tender.

THOSE FIRST CONVERSATIONS

The first conversations one shares with a possible candidate will be the ones that will stick with him/her throughout the relationship. Before picking up the telephone or revving up the mouse for the first time, one should have an idea of what one wants to communicate. What does one want to come away from the conversation having conveyed about oneself? What does one want to have learned about the person on the other end of the line? There are some pretty serious things one will want to share with the person with whom one will be potentially spending an eternity. Therefore, particularly at the beginning of the conversation, one wants to make certain s/he finds out as much as possible. This is probably the biggest decision to be made in one's life, and it must not be done flippantly.

First of all, and these will seem like silly suggestions, but one is amazed how often people just don't *think*. Be sure that nothing else is going on when you communicate. Background music, the TV, loud conversations in the next room—these all need to be silenced or moved away from. Shoo the dog out of the room and get somebody else to

watch younger children that may want to vie for your attention.

This is not the moment for you to chew a stick of gum, suck on a piece of candy, snack on a meal, check your E-mails or clack out on your keyboard a note to your BFF, giving a blow-by-blow account on your other line of what you are saying. If someone else—a translator, perhaps, or a parent, a sibling or a Matching Supporter—is in the room, that person should be respectfully quiet. Having that person chime in is not acceptable. This match is *the candidate's* decision. None of these people will be living with the couple once they are Blessed, and in this introductory moment they should have nothing to say aloud.

This does not mean that the actions and conversations in the first phase should be kept secret. Absolutely the candidates should discuss their interactions, concerns and questions as they arise with parents, pastors, Matching Supporters, and other people that can support them. It is easy for a candidate to let someone go, because s/he did not know what to do or how to handle the anxiety of beginning a conversation or something that might have come up at the beginning of an interaction. Having a support system in place to intervene and explain has saved many a matching near-disaster.

THAT FIRST 'HELLO'

One should introduce oneself: "Hello, this is Harold Jones. I received your profile from my Matching Supporter, and I would like to get to know you." This is not the Hollywood Romance conversation, and not the moment for the candidate to wax grandiose. That first conversation should be kept to everyday things: "I'm in my third year of college...I'm studying Anthropology...We live in Maine...I used to live in Illinois...I have two brothers and a sister." One wants to discuss very, very general things, as if meeting a stranger on a plane.

Listen to the other person. This is not your solo show, and the other person has things to share as well. Where is s/he from? Where has s/he lived before? Who are his/her parents and siblings? Has s/he traveled? Where did s/he go to school? What are his/her hobbies? The conversation might end with a specific plan to talk again soon and a cheerful 'goodbye'.

Think about that conversation. Did you like what you heard? Was the other person's voice cheerful, positive, pleasant and a voice you would like to hear again (and again)?

Even if it is not, plan to continue the conversation for the prescribed three weeks. The person on the other end of the line may be tense, anxious, scared, nervous—a lot of

adjectives that have little to do with speaking in a clear and vibrant voice, particularly if yours is not that person's first language. Make the commitment that you will talk for the full three weeks even if you have reservations following that first discussion.

The second conversation should be much more incisive. Go deep about the things that interest you: what is your passion? What are your dreams? What are your life goals? What are your deal-breakers? Try to keep the conversation from becoming an interrogation. The person should not feel 'guilty until proven innocent', or as if s/he is undergoing a trial by fire. There is no need to 'quiz' the candidate, and it is inappropriate to challenge what the candidate may say. The second and any subsequent conversations should remain cordial and pleasant. Remember, one is not making a decision about whether the two people will be Blessed together at this point, but only if the conversations will continue into Phase II.

A third conversation should be 'what-if'. What if you both decided that you will continue this relationship? Does the other person see the possibility of that? How does one know? One can ask: "I am really enjoying these conversations with you (if that is true). I look forward to them. I would like to continue to the next level, if that is all right with you.

What do you think?" The other person may want to think about that possibility, or may just say, "Okay, let's continue".

The next thing is to inform your family and the Matching Supporter, who is probably sitting anxiously by his/her phone awaiting your call anyway. "Harold and I would like to move on to Phase II and begin discussing if we would like to be together forever." Or some variant on that statement should be sufficient for the Matching Supporter to do a back-flip and then contact the Blessing staff to put your profiles on hold until you both choose to become engaged or to discontinue the relationship.

ON REJECTING:

That first person might not be Mr. or Mrs. Right for you. Just because someone suggested him/her, or even you yourself thought it to be a good idea at the time, you might discover an issue or just not 'feel' the chemistry. What is the right way to go about letting a potential spouse know that you wish to look elsewhere?

First of all, be certain that you really want to reject this person. Ask yourself 'why'. What changed for you? What is the deal-breaker that arose between you that was not there before? Did you discover something, and what was the source? Is there a way around rejection—that is,

might there be a way that the person might change or improve something about him/herself? One young woman rejected a man, because he had only a high school education and no intention of going to college. She thought he would be poor all of his life, and she dropped him, because she felt he had "no future". He told her he could make plenty of money following the vocational training he wanted to get, but she would not hear of it. She moved on. Eight years later, his business is going strong and he is making plenty of money to support a wife that saw his potential and their children.

One also should not listen to rumors and gossip about others. "He was a real slob on GPA" does not mean that he doesn't clean up after himself now. "She was always hanging out with the brothers" might have happened when she was fifteen, or twelve. A report got back to me once that my son had been seen in town with a girl, and he "might have a Chapter 2 problem". The lady in question was his wife. Another one of my contacts still bemoans 'the one that got away', a girl he thought he could do better than and continued his search, despite her abilities. He said she was 'too plump' for his tastes. He was Blessed to a nice person, but after their second child she became quite chubby. In the meantime, the other woman slimmed down, and it

was quite a struggle for him to realize that externals do not always determine who will make a good spouse.

But let us say that, for whatever reason, after much prayer and discussion and maybe a tear or two, one decides to discontinue at the conclusion of Phase I. Then, how one disconnects is very important. There is no reason to leave a trail of broken hearts behind one. First, speak with the Matching Supporter, who will speak with the other person's Matching Supporter and inform them of your desire not to continue. Following that counseling, it would be kind to contact the person one last time, rather than just stop talking or skyping or texting and having them wonder if you were hit by a bus or the Rapture was a real thing and you made it.

You can tell the other person that you thought and prayed about it, and you feel that s/he is wonderful, but probably you are not the best person for him/her. If you can, be specific about your reasons, without accusing. Remember, hearts are easily trampled, and that is not something you want to do. You want to find your ideal spouse, and if the person seems less than ideal to you, then you have the right to reject.

Do not, however, make rejecting a 'pastime'. Seeking a spouse is not like going on a window-shopping trip. Ideally you will have done such a good job of helping your support team to understand the qualities you are looking for in a spouse that there will be no need for you to 'vet' more than one or two people. Never lose sight of the fact that you are dealing with people, and they are people with hearts. The period of searching for a matching partner is probably one of the most vulnerable periods in a person's life. Therefore, choose your words carefully. Somewhere in your life, you are likely to run into this person again. There should be no animosity between you when you do.

ON BEING REJECTED

The world did not just end. In fact, someone just did you a favor. The other person recognized that the relationship was probably not going the way s/he wanted, and let you know this before your heart had time to become involved.

Try to avoid taking the rejection so personally that it freezes your ability to move on or look elsewhere. Recognize that a rejection does not mean that you are a failure, evil, or doomed to bachelor- or spinsterhood forever. The other person just saw that the

two of you, to his/her thinking, were not as compatible as s/he had hoped.

You have a right to know why, particularly if it seemed as if everything was going fine before. If the person says, "I don't know, it just didn't seem quite right", that is his prerogative. If s/he says, "Well, I liked you fine, but my dad doesn't like your dad," or something similar, it is all right to negotiate. But do not push too hard. There are other candidates out there, whose folks might like your dad just fine.

Always be gracious to the rejecting person, unless s/he kicked your dog on the way out the door. Avoid smearing them on Facebook. Be noncommittal to your friends' enquiries of how that dirty rat could have let wonderful you down. People have reconsidered, and they have asked to be reconsidered. Then those mean little comments could come back to haunt you. Just keep in mind that your true spouse is out there somewhere, and this one was just a bump in the road on the way to meeting Mr./Ms. Right.

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RGHT FROM THE START is a newsletter developed for Matching Candidates and their families that are working with Matching Supporter Sandra Lowen. Its purpose is to give additional and collateral information regarding the Matching and Blessing. It is not an official organ of the Blessed Families Ministry or any of its supporting organizations. For further information, contact

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